

SPEECH
OF
HON. W. T. WILLEY,
OF VIRGINIA,
ON THE
ABOLITION OF SLAVERY
IN THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, MARCH 20, 1862.

The special order of the day being the bill for the release of certain persons held to service or labor in the District of Columbia, Mr. WILLEY rose and addressed the Senate as follows:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I listened yesterday with a great deal of pleasure to many of the remarks and arguments of the Senator from Wisconsin; (Mr. DOOLITTLE.) I concur entirely in one of the positions taken by him: that if we are to have the emancipation of the slaves in this country we must connect transportation and colonization with it. I do not concur with him, however, when he said that he would vote for this bill—not because, if I had the power to control it so as only to effect myself, in the consequences which might ensue, I should not be in favor of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. I wish that it did not exist here; that it never had existed here. I believe that this great nation ought to have this District as common ground where the world might assemble without anything of a character to offend the sensibilities, the feelings, or the principles of mankind. And yet, sir, I cannot vote for this bill; and I rise now more for the purpose of filing a petition than with any intention of making an argument upon it; more for the purpose of addressing myself to the compassion of Senators than with any expectation of influencing their judgments and their opinions.

I shall speak to-day as a border slave State man, the humble advocate of the sentiments of the State that I represent. I shall have no reproaches to utter, no imputation of motives to make, no menaces, no angry words of defiance, which I am sorry to say

too often enter into the discussions in Congress. But as a representative of the public sentiment of the loyal people of Virginia, and in their name, I beg Senators to pause long enough to consider the position which they occupy. Sir, they were the first to strike a blow in the field against the rebellion and in favor of the Constitution. The soil of Virginia, on my own native hills, received the first baptism of blood shed in defence of the Constitution, and that blood was drawn from the hearts of her own children. The loyal people of Virginia have withstood the shock of battle, they have endured the ravages of fire and of the sword, and they still stand to-day firm in their original integrity and true to their allegiance to the Government and the Constitution in the midst of the surrounding desolations of this cruel and unholy war, to which they point as the proud memorial of their loyalty. Sir, in the name of two hundred northwestern Virginians who have been immured for many months in the dungeons of rebellion at Richmond, I appeal to you to-day, to your generosity, to your forbearance, to your magnanimity.

The ship of State is, as it were, upon the ocean, tossed upon the mountain waves, every beam creaking and strained by the pressure that is upon her. Some of her crew have been washed or thrust from her decks, and are struggling in the midst of the sea to regain their foothold upon her sure planks; and what do we see, sir? Instead of throwing them a rope or a plank to aid them to recover their original position, almost daily every morning are there fresh invocations to the very storm-king himself to breathe fresh blasts of his fiery breath upon the raging elements amidst which they are struggling for life and for security.

But, sir, I had not intended to make these preliminary remarks. I have a simple question to propose to the Senate; and it is to that question that I design to direct the attention of the Senate.

I may remark that the question of slavery in the United States is one of absorbing interest. With its intimate relation to the political welfare of the country, it connects moral and religious considerations, appealing to the best sentiments and sensibilities of our nature. I am not disposed to quarrel with those who would bestow upon it a large measure of thought and deliberation; but it is just one of those questions whose tendency is to exclude from equal regard other questions of equal importance. A wise and comprehensive statesmanship carefully avoids the impolicy and danger of allowing any one of the interests of the State, however important, to monopolize the whole of its care to the neglect of other interests. It gives to each department of the public welfare the consideration it requires. Here I may be permitted to indulge in a reference to the words of wisdom and of warning of one of the greatest statesmen of our country. Mr. Webster, in his great speech in the Senate in 1850, animadverting upon the ultraism, impracticability, and exclusiveness which this question of slavery had then engendered in the minds and in the policy of a certain class of individuals, said:

"There are men who, with clear perceptions, as they think, of their own duty, do not see how too hot a pursuit of one duty may involve them in the violation of another, or how too warm an embracement of one truth may lead to a disregard of other truths equally important. As I heard it stated strongly, not many days ago, these persons are disposed to mount upon some duty as a war-horse"—

Uncle Toby would have said a "hobby-horse"—

"and to drive furiously on, and upon, and over all other duties that may stand in the way. There are men who, in times of that sort, and disputes of that sort, are of opinion that human duties may be ascertained with the precision of mathematics. They deal with morals as with mathematics, and they think what is right may be distinguished from what is wrong with the precision of an algebraic equation. They have, therefore, none too much charity toward others who differ with them. They are apt, too, to think that nothing is good but what is perfect, and that there are no compromises or modifications to be made in submission to difference of opinion, or in deference to other men's judgment. If their perspicacious vision enables them to detect a spot on the face of the sun, they think that a good reason why the sun should be struck down from heaven. They prefer the chance of running into utter darkness to living in heavenly light, if that heavenly light be not absolutely without any imperfection. There are impatient men—too impatient always to give heed to the admission of St. Paul, 'that we are not to do evil that good may come'—too impatient to wait for the slow progress of moral causes in the improvement of mankind."

Mr. President, the question which I wish to discuss is, is it wise or expedient, under existing circumstances, and at this time, to pass this bill? Sir, this bill is a part of a series of measures, already initiated, all looking to the same ultimate result—the universal abolition of slavery by Congress. This bill and the bill of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. TRUMBULL) for the confiscation of property in the seceded States, and the resolutions introduced by the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. SUMNER) some weeks ago, contemplate the same purpose—unconditional, immediate, and universal emancipation. It is to the consequences which must inevitably result from these measures, if adopted, to which I solicit the attention of the Senate. These consequences, in my judgment, involve the lives of thousands of my fellow-citizens, and the happiness of all the loyal people of all the border slaveholding States. Perhaps I should be justified in saying that they involved in most serious peril the restoration of the Union and the Constitution.

The duties, interests, and relations of a people so numerous and enterprising as those of the United States, inhabiting a territory so extensive, and embracing so great a variety of climate, soil, pursuits, and staple productions, must necessarily be complex in their character, and give rise to diversity of opinions, passions, prejudices, and parties. It is manifest, if we hope to preserve the Union, we must, in the striking language of Mr. Benton:

"Imitate the words and conduct of the wise, just, modest, patriotic, intelligent, and disinterested men who carried their country through a momentous revolution—moulded that country into one brotherly Union—and then put the government they had formed into operation, in the same fraternal spirit of *amity, mutual deference, and concession*' in which they made it."

Mr. President, I shall not trouble the Senate with any argument respecting the constitutional power of Congress to pass laws emancipating slaves. The arguments already made against this

power by Congress in the States where slavery exists, have not been answered, and I believe they never will be. But I do not think the argument against the expediency and practicability of such laws has been exhausted. Sir, I admit that the rebels, especially the leaders of the rebellion, should be punished. They ought, in some manner, to be made to bear the burdens of the war they have forced upon the country, as far as is possible, and to indemnify loyal men for the injuries inflicted upon them by the rebellion. But this punishment should be according to law. To punish treason by unconstitutional penalties is to be guilty of virtual treason ourselves, to say nothing of the inconsistency and danger of such a procedure. And it is worthy of remark, that no measure of emancipation yet proposed contains any indemnity for injuries received by the Government or individuals. Simply to emancipate the slave of the rebel, may be a punishment to him, but it affords no relief to the loyal man who has suffered by the rebellion. Nay, one of the fundamental provisions of the confiscation bill of the Senator from Illinois is, to make the loyal people of the Union contribute of their means to transport and colonize the emancipated slaves of rebels. I cannot understand either the justice or expediency of such a policy. It seems to me to involve a manifest inconsistency. It punishes the traitor, indeed, but it only increases the burdens and taxes of the loyal people.

Mr. President, I doubt the expediency of agitating such questions at this time, and therefore I have regretted the introduction of all these measures. It is my opinion that the one great absorbing object of Congress should be to prosecute the war and to conquer a peace and a restoration of the Union. This is a work of magnitude and importance, sufficient to employ all the energies and resources of Congress and the nation. It is no time to introduce those measures of legislation of a general character, which, ordinarily, in times of peace and security, occupy the attention of Congress. Least of all would it be wise to introduce topics of discussion and measures of policy which would be of a nature to distract the counsels of the nation, or inflame party passions and prejudices.

The vital necessity of existing exigencies is unity of purpose and effort on the part of the friends of the Union. He who would introduce measures creating distraction in our councils and purposes, will be affording aid and comfort to the enemy more fatal than his arms.

Mr. President, things may be lawful which are not expedient sometimes. Some of these measures respecting slavery may violate no principle of constitutional law. I cannot say that the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia would be unlawful. I do not believe it would be. I think we have the constitutional power to abolish it here. Yet I am equally satisfied that the exercise of this power would violate the obligations of good faith, which we owe to the State of Maryland. But aside from

this consideration, the question arises, is it expedient, at this time, to agitate such questions? The wise man of old says, "there is a time for all things." I think this is no time for legislating in reference to such matters. Such legislation is not essential, nor even beneficial, in prosecuting the war and restoring peace to the Nay, it will be positively injurious; it will hinder and delay, if not imperil, the accomplishment of union and peace. Why may we not wait until peace and the Union are restored, when, with the calmness and deliberation befitting subjects so grave and delicate in their relations, we may arrive at wiser and better results? Why thrust these questions upon the country and upon Congress now, when both are staggering beneath the pressure of exigencies involving the very integrity of our national existence? Are not the elements of revolution and disorganization sufficiently rife, without seeking additional causes of strife and collision?

Sir, in no degree can the agitation and adoption of the policy contained in these measures relating to slavery contribute to the success of our arms, the peace of the country, its physical or moral welfare, or to the restoration of the Union. Nay, sir, the agitation of these questions, under existing circumstances, must be positively mischievous. Will it not create strife and divisions here? Will it not disturb the country? Above all, will it not afford aid and comfort to the enemy? I am sure it will. It will be used by the leaders of the rebellion to "fire the southern heart." The people of the south have been taught to believe that the object and design of the Republican party was to abolish slavery in all the States. These propositions will be seized upon as evidence of this intention. They will say, "Look at their unconstitutional confiscation laws, making no safe or practical discrimination between Union men and secessionists. Look at the bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia; it is a stepping-stone to further encroachments." Especially will they point to the sweeping resolutions of the great apostle of abolition, the Senator from Massachusetts, [Mr. SUMNER,] which, by one dash of the pen, deprives every southern man of his slaves. This is what the rebel leaders will delight to say, and delight to have so much reason to say. Thus will the followers of Mr. Yancey "fire the southern heart." These propositions will fill the southern journals; they will furnish the staple of inflammatory editorial commentaries for months to come, as they are now doing. No recruiting officer will have such power to replenish the thinned ranks of the rebel army as these propositions. They will add thousands to the numbers of our foes in the field. No financial skill of southern statesmen will have such power to replenish the depleted treasury of the rebel government. Thus will these measures advance the cause of rebellion in the South; and so, consequently, will they prolong the horrors of war on our part, increase our expenditures, and augment the burdens of taxation. Worse than all, they will destroy that Union sentiment in the South on which we hope to reorganize the State governments and

restore the authority of the Constitution. They will not only encourage our enemies in the South, but they will dishearten our friends there. Thus do the claims of our common humanity, deprecating the evils of war, suggest the impolicy of such legislation at this time.

Why prolong the war so unnecessarily? Why engage in legislation not essential either to the prosperity of the loyal non-slaveholding States or to the suppression of the rebellion in the southern States, the practical effect of which will be virtually to place weapons in the hands, soldiers in the ranks, and money in the coffers of the enemy? The cost of the war, the public debt created by it, the amount of taxation, will be large enough if the war were to cease to-morrow. Why should we, by legislation unnecessary for the prosecution of the war to a speedy and successful termination, increase the public debt and oppress the people with still heavier burdens of taxation? Is not every suggestion of prudence, economy, and, indeed, of patriotism, opposed to it?

Mr. President, it is desired to make this a war of total extermination? Let us beware how we drive our friends in the South, with hearts filled with desperation, into the ranks of our adversary! One year's experience has taught us that a divided South was no contemptible foe. What will it be united? Seven hundred thousand square miles of fruitful territory, full of natural resources, inhabited by six millions of united, desperate people, may not be easily overcome, and brought back to their allegiance.

Besides, sir, there is no necessity for driving those people to such desperate extremities. Justice, moderation, generosity, will meet a joyful response in many a southern heart. They love the old flag; they love the old Union. Show them that their rights under the Constitution—their prejudices of education and habit, if you please to say so—are to be respected, and you will strike a blow more fatal to the rebel cause than a score of such victories as that at Fort Donelson. And this will be a victory without bloodshed. It destroys no valuable lives. It wastes no resources of the country's wealth. It makes no widows or orphans. It desolates no homes. Why should not the North be generous and forbearing? Are not moderation and forbearance the invariable characteristics of a great people?

I understand Mr. Lincoln himself to be actuated by such principles. I understand that these were his principles long ago. I understand that, in reference to this very matter of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, he was, in 1858, and I hope is still, governed by the same considerations of expediency. If in 1858 considerations of expediency were enough to cause the Republican party to pause in their course at that day, now with the storm and tempest of war upon us, and an accumulating debt pressing down the people, should we not also hearken to the suggestions of expediency? Mr. Lincoln, in 1858, in his discussion with Mr. Douglas, at Quincy, used this language:

"We have a due regard to the actual presence of slavery among us, and the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way, and all the constitutional obligations thrown about it. I suppose that, in reference to its actual existence in the nation and to our constitutional obligations, *we have no right at all to disturb it in the States where it exists, and we profess that we have no more inclination to disturb it than we have the right to do it. We go further than that; we do not propose to disturb it, where, in one instance, we think the Constitution would permit us. We think the Constitution would permit us to disturb it in the District of Columbia. Still, we do not propose to do that, unless it should be in terms which I do not suppose the nation is very likely soon to agree to—the terms of making emancipation gradual and compensating the unwilling owners. Where we suppose we have the constitutional right, we restrain ourselves in reference to the actual existence of the institution and the difficulties thrown about it.*"

In the same speech, a little further on, Mr. Lincoln declared that—

"If there be any man in the Republican party who is impatient over the necessity springing from the actual presence of slavery, and is impatient of the constitutional guarantees thrown around it, and would act in disregard of these, he, too, is misplaced standing with us. He will find his place somewhere else; for we have a due regard, so far as we are capable of understanding them, for all these things. This, gentlemen, as well as I can give it, is a plain statement of our principles in all their enormity."

Why may we not to-day, under the influence of the same suggestion of a wise expediency and forbearance, withhold our hands from meddling with the institution of slavery here, withhold from Congress all questions connected with this disturbing element, and unite hands and hearts in one common, undivided, vigorous effort to restore the Constitution, conquer a peace, and after that, in the language of Mr. Douglas just before he died, we shall have time to settle all these difficulties? I will quote his words:

"When we shall have rescued the Government and country from its perils, and seen its flag floating in triumph over every inch of American soil, it will then be time enough to inquire as to who and what has brought these troubles upon us. Let him be marked as no true patriot who will not abandon all such issues in times like these."

Again, I ask Senators to consider what may be the effect of these extreme measures upon the public sentiment of the loyal States. There is but one sentiment there now, but one mind, one purpose. Therein consists our strength and the surest guarantee of our success. But this unity of sentiment and purpose is predicated on the distinctly declared purpose of the war, to wit: the suppression of the rebellion and the restoration of the Constitution and the Government as they were prior to the rebellion, without change or modification. Sir, let it be understood that there is a different object to be accomplished—such as is indicated by some, if not all, of the measures to which I have alluded—and that unity and harmony of public sentiment will be instantly destroyed. We shall thereafter in the loyal States be "a house divided against itself." Distraction will disturb our proceedings here, division will enter the Army, and the cause of constitutional liberty will be imperiled with defeat and disgrace. Already are there indications of dissatisfaction in the public mind lest Congress should depart from the avowed purpose hitherto announced as the only object of the war.

Mr. President, the wisdom of a measure may be best ascertained from an examination of its practical results. The tree is known by the quality of its fruits. Now what must be the practical effects of these measures of emancipation? And here I say that the welfare of the slave is not to be overlooked. As wise and humane legislators, as Christian statesmen, we are not authorized to disregard this. What then will be the effect upon the slaves of the summary emancipation contemplated in any of the schemes before Congress? Suppose they are emancipated; what then? Are they freemen in fact? Will they have the rights of freemen? Sir, such an idea is utterly fallacious. It will practically amount to nothing. You cannot enact the slave into a free man by bill in Congress. A charter of his liberty may be engrossed, enrolled, and passed into a law, with all the formalities of legislation, and still he must remain, virtually, a slave. The servile nature of centuries cannot be eradicated by the rhetoric of Senators, nor by an act of Congress. You may call "spirits from the vasty deep," but they will not come. You may emancipate the slave, and call him free, but he is still a slave. He can never be anything else in this country. A freeman has the right of locomotion; he has the right of going into any State, and of becoming the citizen of any State. Let me ask the Senator from Illinois whether, if I set my slave free, he will allow him to come to Illinois. Let me ask the same question of the Senators from Indiana. Sir, the constitutions of both of those States prohibit free negroes from becoming citizens of those States, or even residents thereof; and that is the liberty which you propose for the slave. Other States are agitating the question whether they will enact similar interdicts.

Now, sir, I ask, can the free negro be a freeman clothed with the rights of freemen in this country? In how many States is he entitled to the right of suffrage or to be a juror, or a judge, or to a seat in the Legislature; to make, interpret, or execute the laws of the State in which he lives? I understand there are some negroes living in the North who possess large estates, are well-educated, and of good morals and manners. Do you receive them into your families on terms of equality? Do you give them your daughters in marriage? Why not? Are they not wealthy, intelligent, and polite, and for aught I know, handsome negroes? Are not "all men born free and equal?" Sir, I am not going to discuss the dogma of the natural equality of men. I am only referring to facts—"fixed facts;" and I say, right or wrong, naturally equal, or naturally inferior, the negro never can be a freeman, in this country, enjoying social and political equality.

Now, I ask you to look with a candid eye upon the real condition of the southern slave. There he is, a slave by birth; a slave by law; a slave by education; a slave by habit; a slave in word, thought, and deed, in body and in mind; ignorant, degraded, poor, helpless, without the capacity of self-maintenance. You cry, what a pity! I heartily respond, what a pity! But still it is a fact.

Your pity does not alter the condition of the slave, else he had been a freeman long ago. We must be guided by our judgment in these matters, not by our sympathies. We must take things as they actually exist, and legislating for the slave, we must conform to his actually existing character and condition, moral, intellectual and physical. We shall not deserve the name of statesmen if we do not; nor shall we entitle ourselves to the character of philanthropists if we disregard such considerations. Sir, would you recommend the Chinese to adopt a republican form of government? Would you advise the native Africans, cannibals and all, to organize a government on the model of the Constitution of the United States? The idea is preposterous. And now, sir, candidly considering the ignorance, degradation, and helplessness of the four millions of slaves in the South, can you desire their immediate emancipation? Would it be wise? Would it not be an act of cruelty to the slaves? Sir, what would become of them? Think of it. Think of four millions of these degraded, helpless beings, without a dollar of money, without an acre of land or an implement of trade or husbandry, without house or home, thrust out upon the community to maintain themselves? Sir, they would starve to death, or they would steal, or they would murder and rob. Better drive them into the Gulf of Mexico, and end their sufferings at once, than perpetrate such a monstrous cruelty as this upon them.

We heard from our friends the other day—the honorable Senator from New Hampshire, (Mr. HALE,) and the honorable Senator from Wisconsin, (Mr. DOOLITTLE,)—in regard to the prosperity of the British West Indies and of the French West Indies. I shall rejoice in the perfect success of those efforts to elevate the African race; but I have read on both sides of the question, and I confess I am in doubt to-day whether the evidence be not stronger against the prospect of success than in favor of it. It is very easy to go into a subject and select here and there a fact, and skip a great many other intermediate facts, and make out a pretty fair record; but how the case really is I am at a loss to know from the conflicting accounts of travellers, and even of philanthropists who have visited them. But did not the Senators know, did it not occur to them, how different was the position of the slaves in those islands from that of the slaves in the United States? There were but few white men in those islands; the soil was all their own; implements of husbandry were put into their hands, and with the moral influence and watchfulness of great Christian nations standing beside them and breathing upon them encouragement and words of good will, affording them moral and physical aid and protection; and yet, with all these advantages; with a soil all their own; with no white man to overshadow them; with a government of their own; with the moral influence and aid of these Christian patrons that had set them free, it is to-day, after so many years, a question whether it will not be a

failure rather than a success. God grant that it may be a perfect success!

And now, you men of the North, I beg to ask, what would be the consequences of this wholesale emancipation on your own communities? How long would it be until this miserable population, like the frogs of Egypt, would be infesting your kitchens, squatting in your gates, and filling your almshouses? Sir, are you willing to receive them? If you set them free, you must receive them. Will your operatives extend to them the right hand of fellowship, and receive them as coequals and colaborers in your fields and shops? Meantime, what will become of the cotton fields of the South, and the cotton factories of the North? While you are increasing the number of your laborers, you will be destroying the sources of their employment. You will ruin the industrial interests of the South, and bring serious detriment on the labor of the North.

The answer to all this is, transport and colonize the emancipated slaves in some tropical country. What then? Whither shall they be sent? Where shall we find a tropical territory for four millions of inhabitants? And where shall we find the money to pay for a territory sufficient to settle four millions of inhabitants? How much will it cost? I say not hingof constitutional difficulties in the way. Let them pass, along with the suspension of the *habeas corpus, et id omne genus*. Where is the money to come from? Rhetoric and philanthropic platitudes will not purchase territory. Then, sir, there is the cost of transportation and the cost of the outfit and the cost of houses to be built for the reception of four millions of people, and the cost of implements of husbandry and tools of trade, and the cost of food and clothing for the first year, at least; for it cannot be supposed that the intention is to set these poor creatures down in the woods, without such provisions for their comfort and subsistence. And then, sir, our task is just commenced. We must provide for their continued supervision, direction, and protection. And how long must all this continue? How long will it be before this mass of ignorant and servile population will become capable of self-government and self-subsistence? How many generations will it require to divest the slave of his servility, and to clothe him with the independence of the freeman? And what will all this cost? Who can make the calculation? Who can pay the debt? The accumulating millions of the current war debt, now rising mountain high, and resting with the weight of mountains upon the people, sink into mole-hills before the atlas-like dimensions of the sum that will be required for the accomplishment of this stupendous scheme of philanthropy. A pretty considerable job, truly, and a fine opportunity for some more Covode and Van Wyck committees.

Sir, why, in this hour of financial pressure and embarrassment, should we rush headlong into such wanton schemes of taxation? The country will not, cannot, endure it. The thing is utterly impracticable. I am happy to perceive that the northern mind is

beginning to appreciate the difficulties surrounding these schemes of immediate emancipation. I find the following in a recent number of a leading New York journal—The World. The editor says :

“The negro race is multiplying with such rapidity in this country, that, in a few generations more, its relation to the white population will have become a question of fearful magnitude. At the time of our first census, in 1790, there were in the United States only seven hundred and fifty-seven thousand negroes; at our last census, in 1860, there were four million six hundred thousand. Before the end of the century there will be a negro population of twelve or thirteen millions. They are too numerous ever to be deported from the country. The intellectual, social, and political capacity of the negro race is not yet even approximately ascertained, and yet correct views on this subject must furnish the only light which can intelligently guide the legislation for determining the relation of the two races. It may never become the office of the General Government to emancipate the slaves. But Providence seems clearly to have laid on it the duty of contributing to the knowledge by which the great problem shall ultimately be solved. What is now wanted is an enlightened system, devised by men who appreciate its possible far-reaching results, for bringing to bear on a collective mass of ordinary plantation negroes all the educative and humanizing influences of which their condition is susceptible. To furnish facilities for such an experiment is work worthy of an enlightened government. We feel quite sure that it can be conducted to best advantage only by being taken out of the coarse hands of soldiers and politicians, and placed in charge of an unselfish commission of humane and able men.”

I cannot conclude these remarks without some observations of a more general character. Sir, I fear we are drifting into dangerous extremes. I fear we are about to violate the pledged faith of the nation. Sir, what is the object of the present war? For what are we fighting? To what purpose are we taxing the people and expending the treasures of the country? Why are thousands of the noblest sons of the Republic yielding up their lives on the field of battle? I had supposed it was for the preservation of the Union. I had supposed that it was, in the language of the President, to “protect, maintain, and defend the Constitution.” I had supposed that Congress meant what it said, when, at the late special session, it declared, with a unanimity hardly ever paralleled, that the object of the war was to suppress the rebellion and restore the Union and the Constitution, and nothing more. Influenced by this public and official declaration and pledged faith of the nation, the loyal spirit of the nation silenced the clamors of party strife and political factions; and the people, abnegating all past differences and distinctions of political opinion, rushed to the rescue, shoulder to shoulder, in response to the call of our patriotic Chief Magistrate. Fixing their eyes and their hearts on the old flag, they determined that no star should ever be erased from its ample folds. The flag as it was, the Union as it was, the Constitution as it was—this was the universal sentiment. It has been consecrated by the blood of the noblest men of the country, whom no other or less worthy sentiment could have rallied to the conflict. This simple, distinct, avowed, and only purpose of this war has been baptized in the blood of Democrats and Whigs and Republicans, who fell, side by side, on every field and every deck where there has been a conflict of arms. Have they been betrayed? Were they the

mere dupes of an ulterior purpose, hitherto concealed, and only now about to be avowed? Is their memory to be revered, not as the champions and martyrs of constitutional liberty, but as the filibusters of a mere sectional foray? Is it, after all, a partisan, a miserable sectional war?

Sir, a few weeks ago we expelled a Senator because, on the 1st of March last, he wrote a letter to Jefferson Davis, commending to his regard a friend who had a valuable fire-arm to sell, and who visited the South mainly for the purpose of selling it. This was deemed evidence of disloyalty sufficient to warrant his ejection from the Senate. But what do we now see? What, for instance, is the proposition of the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts, [Mr. SUMNER?] It is by one fell swoop of his pen to blot ten or twelve States out of the Union forever, to remit them back to a territorial condition, and thus to involve our muniments of right, the titles to our estates, our franchises, our municipal privileges, in a kind of *hotch pot*, begetting and superinducing an inevitable confusion as inexplicable and dark as original chaos.

Sir, we are told that rebels have forfeited their rights under the Constitution, that the States in rebellion have abdicated their authority as States, and may be no longer recognized as members of the Confederacy. I shall not pause to discuss such a monstrous proposition. It is enough to say that the Constitution provides that "the United States shall guarantee to EVERY State in this Union a republican form of government;" and, therefore, the paramount and indispensable duty of Congress is to *preserve*, not to *destroy*, the States; and to do this ample powers are conferred to "suppress insurrection," &c.

But, sir, are we all traitors in the South? What is to become of the loyal inhabitants of Virginia and Tennessee and Louisiana and Alabama and North Carolina—loyal men and women, whose hearts have been swelling, swelling with hopes of deliverance from their thralldom—whose longing eyes have been turned towards us, day and night, to catch the first glimpse of their old flag coming back—loyal men, who have suffered contumely and persecution and confiscation and imprisonment for their enduring, unconquerable love of the Union? What is to become of the late Senator from Tennessee, (Mr. JOHNSON?) Is his seat here, so honorably filled, and recently so generously resigned by him, to be thus summarily vacated forever? Has he gone home to remain there in virtual banishment, with his State obliterated from the catalogue of the Union? Is it for this, that he and others have been driven into exile, enduring banishment from their families, and the loss of their estates? Is this the compensation and reward which loyal southern men are to receive for the ruin of fire and sword and confiscation which have made their homes and hearths a desolation? If so, we may well pray, "save us from our friends." It would have been better to have been crushed to death at once beneath the iron heel of the rebellion. We should then have been saved from this sadder day, from this sadder

calamity of beholding the final destruction of all our cherished hopes, not by the power of our foes, but by the hand of our protectors and friends.

Sir, I know not what the decision of the Senate will be in reference to these measures. But this thing I think I know: the public sentiment is against these distracting propositions at this time. The Senate may be for them; but the people are against them. That spirit of enlarged and generous patriotism, which, outside of this Hall, has rebuked the selfishness of party spirit, and triumphed over the influences of sectional prejudice, and melted and fused the hearts of the people all into one great heart, beating and throbbing with one great unextinguishable desire for the restoration of the Union as it was—that spirit of the people will yet triumph over all opposition. It will command obedience to its behests. It will hurl from power all who refuse to obey it. It is triumphing now with a glorious majesty worthy of a cause involving the existence of constitutional liberty in the world. It was this spirit which planted the ensigns of the Republic on the rebel redoubts at Roanoke, and carried them victoriously across the entrenchments of the traitors at Fort Donelson. Under God, I believe it will continue to triumph, *triumph, triumph*, until all treason and sectionalism, and all disorganizing schemes, North, South, East, West, everywhere, shall be overcome, and the Union shall be restored, and the Constitution, as our fathers ordained it, shall be re-established in all its original integrity and supremacy, and peace and concord shall again bring joy to the hearts and prosperity to the homes of the American people.

If anything can defeat this devoutly wished for consummation of the nation's hope, it will not be the arms of the conspirators in rebellion; it will be the more fatal influences of such schemes as that propounded by the Senator from Massachusetts, in the resolutions to which I have referred.

Mr. President, if slavery shall suffer from the incidental and necessary effects upon it of this war, let it be so; I shall not regret it. I am no pro-slavery man. I wish there were no slavery. I believe that slavery is doomed. I believe the time is coming when it will be abolished. Heaven hasten the day when, under the regenerating and reforming influences of Christian civilization, the slave shall be qualified for the enjoyment of freedom, and when it shall be practicable and humane to strike the fetters from the limbs of the last bondman of our race. But let us abide the appointed time of divine Providence. Let us not, in our eagerness to avenge the wrongs, real or imaginary, of the slave, repeat the folly of Samson, and, in the frenzy of an indiscreet zeal, pull down the pillars of the Constitution, and involve both the slave and ourselves in the ruins of our country.

There is another reason why we should pause at this time. The House of Representatives has passed, by a large majority, the re-

solution suggested by the President of the United States in his late message to Congress. That resolution is as follows:

“Resolved, &c., That the United States ought to co-operate with any State which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system.”

For the reasons already alleged, I have regretted that the President has thought it was proper at this time and under existing circumstances to make this recommendation to Congress. But it has been made; and if, as is very probable, it was made to arrest those extreme, dangerous, and unconstitutional measures upon which I have been animadverting, we ought, perhaps, to be thankful to the President for his interposition, and to accept his proposition, being the least objectionable that has been presented.

The Constitutional power of Congress to appropriate money for the purpose indicated has been seriously questioned, and I confess that I have supposed the power was doubtful. But I am willing to be controlled by the greater learning and wisdom of others; and certainly, if we have ever had an able constitutional lawyer, it was Mr. Webster. I beg to read another short extract from his speech already referred to—a speech made on Mr. Clay's compromise resolutions on the 7th of March, 1850:

“I have one other remark to make. In my observations upon slavery as it has existed in the country and as it now exists, I have expressed no opinion of the mode of its extinguishment or melioration. I will say, however, though I have nothing to propose on that subject, because I do not deem myself so competent as other gentlemen to consider it, that if any gentleman from the South shall propose a scheme of colonization to be carried on by this government upon a large scale, for the transportation of free colored people to any colony or place in the world, I should be quite disposed to incur almost any degree of expense to accomplish that object. Nay, sir, following an example set here more than twenty years ago by a great man, then a Senator from New York, I would return to Virginia, and through her for the benefit of the whole South, the money received from the lands and territories ceded by her to this Government for any such purpose as to relieve, in whole or in part, or any way to diminish or deal beneficially with the free colored population of the southern States. I have said that I honor Virginia for her cession of this territory. There have been received into the Treasury of the United States \$80,000,000, the proceeds of the sales of the public lands ceded by Virginia. If the residue should be sold at the same rate, the whole aggregate will exceed two hundred millions of dollars. If Virginia and the South see fit to adopt any proposition to relieve themselves from the free people of color among them, they have my free consent that the Government shall pay them any sum of money out of its proceeds which may be adequate to the purpose.”

This matter has been referred by the Senate to the Committee on the Judiciary. They have only reported to-day. The sense of the Senate upon the proposition has not yet been ascertained. If it should be the same as that of the other House, a new policy will be inaugurated, which, we may hope, will measurably remove all strife on the question of slavery from the Halls of Congress. And why should such a policy not be inaugurated? Why shall we not adopt the resolution recommended by the President? *“Such a proposition,”* says the President in his message, *“on the part of the General Government, sets up no claim of a right by Fed-*

eral authority to interfere with slavery within State limits, referring, as it does, the absolute control of the subject in each case to the State and its people immediately interested."

Thus is the exclusive right of the State over slavery where it exists distinctly recognized, and the question of emancipation is referred to the only authority competent to dispose of it. Any scheme of emancipation organized by the States will necessarily be gradual, allowing time to bring to bear upon the slave emancipated those moral and educative influences indispensable to his qualification for the duties and responsibilities of freedom, so that he may be judiciously and humanely colonized.

Now, sir, if this proposition of the President shall be adopted, and the State of Maryland shall avail herself of the benefit of it, then would all objection against the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia be removed. Why not wait and see? At least, why not postpone action on this bill until the proposition of the President has been considered?

Some Senators have expressed surprise that loyal men in the South, who have suffered so much from this rebellion, should resist with so much zeal and pertinacity the abolition of slavery, which, it is alleged, is the cause of the rebellion, and therefore of their sufferings. Sir, my resistance to these measures is not on account of any attachment to slavery, but from my love and veneration for the Constitution. Moreover, we have suffered so much from the horrors of this war, that we deprecate whatever may increase and prolong its miseries, as the passage of these bills will assuredly do.

Mr. President, some twelve years ago, Henry Clay, who, take him all in all, stands, and perhaps will continue to stand, in history and in merit next to the "Father of his Country," went home from this city to prepare for his journey to "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns." But he had not been there long until the country, alarmed at the progress of those sectional animosities which have at last culminated in treason and rebellion, called him back to the councils of the nation. I happened to be here when he returned, and it seemed to me as if the pillars of the Capitol were conscious of his presence, and stood firmer on their bases as they heard the footsteps of the "grand old commoner" again entering the Senate Chamber. Sir, it was his efforts here then to save his country which literally burst his great heart. The evils and dangers then only in prospect are now actually upon the country. May I not, therefore, conclude my remarks by recalling the dying utterances of that pure patriot, addressed to you, Senators of the North? How literally are his predictions now in progress of fulfilment:

"In the first place, sir, there is a vast and incalculable amount of property to be sacrificed, and to be sacrificed, not by your sharing in the common burdens, but exclusive of you. And this is not all. The social intercourse, habit, safety, property, life, everything, is at hazard in a greater or less degree in the slave States.

"Sir, look at the storm which is now raging before you, beating in all its rage pitilessly on your family."

He was addressing a southern Senator in the chair:

"They are all in the South. But where are your families, where are your people, Senators from the free States? They are safely housed, enjoying all the blessings of domestic comfort, peace, and quiet in the bosoms of their own families."

Would to God that you could have witnessed the destruction, the desperation, the misery, the grief, the woe, the sorrow, that has swept through our hills in northwestern Virginia. You could then realize, perhaps, to some extent, the full import of these eloquent words:

"Behold, Mr. President, that dwelling-house now wrapped in flames. Listen, sir, to the rafters and beams which fall in succession, amid the crash, and the flames ascending higher and higher as they tumble down. Behold those women and children who are flying from the calamitous scene, and with their shrieks and lamentations imploring the aid of high Heaven."

What a prophetic sentence! We have witnessed the actual fulfilment of it amidst my own native hills.

"Whose house is that? Whose wives and children are they? Yours in the free States? No. You are looking on in safety and security, while the conflagration which I have described is raging in the slave States, and produced, not intentionally by you, but produced from the inevitable tendency of the measures which you have adopted, and which others have carried far beyond what you have wished."

"In the one scale, then, we behold sentiment, sentiment, sentiment alone; in the other property, the social fabric, life, and all that makes life desirable and happy."

Mr. President, on the death of Mr. Clay the Whig party was dissolved. It has been generally absorbed in other party organizations. A few of us only remain, like fragments of a wreck, tossed to and fro on the billows of this revolution. Sir, the cup of life is seldom so bitter as that there may not be found in it some pleasant ingredient. It is some consolation to me to-day that no prejudice or influences of party spirit can mingle with the service which I owe to my country; that no trammel or impediment of party obligation can interpose between me and my fidelity to the Constitution; that I can, and that I will, with a devotion subordinate only to that which I owe to my Maker, support all measures and any party that will, in my judgment, best promote the preservation of the Union, and the true glory of the nation. If in such an hour of the country's peril as this I should be governed by motives less worthy and patriotic, I ought to be repudiated as an unfaithful public servant, and to be abhorred as a traitor forever.